

# Massachusetts Statewide Community Transportation Coordination Conference

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### Creating a Peer Support Network for Volunteer Driver Programs

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#### Lessons from research and experience

- Every program is different
- Most programs spent most of their time in keeping their program going
- Program coordinators don't have time or resources to do research on best practices, evaluate program effectiveness or plan ahead
- Many volunteer driver programs are hosted by Councils on Aging (COAs) and are small and resource-strapped. Meanwhile, funding is constrained, and volunteer driver programs may be viable alternatives for a low-cost transportation service in some communities that don't have the means to support a van.

#### Background on volunteer driver programs

- Many programs are looking for more strategies to recruit volunteer drivers. Some that have been discussed are:
  - Recruit retired police officers and fire fighters
  - Billboards that advertise opportunities to "Help a neighbor"
  - Establish very low thresholds to volunteers – "help a neighbor every once in a while"
  - TRIP model (Mystic Valley): they recruit passengers, who themselves find a driver. The passenger is then reimbursed for a set number of miles per month.
- Programs are always looking for more information about liability and insurance issues
  - Liability rests on the volunteers as long as the passenger is *inside* the car. However, you can purchase liability insurance for the organization to cover additional costs for all volunteer drivers
  - Some programs require drivers to carry a higher limit in their car insurance
- Screening volunteers
  - All programs should require proof of insurance
  - Get driver records for each driver from the RMV
  - Always CORI check volunteers
- Volunteer Driver training
  - Sign volunteers up for classes through AAA, AARP, etc.
    - Some online resources for defensive driving and other driving skills
    - If your program has a state-funded vehicle, you can access driver training through MArtap:
  - Be sure your volunteers understand what they are expected to do!
    - Interactions with passengers
    - Support your volunteers in setting boundaries with their passengers
    - Sensitivity training for seniors, people with disabilities, other cultures/languages, medical conditions, etc.

**Proposal: the creation of a Peer Support Network for Volunteer Driver Programs**

- MassMobility has been facilitating a peer network for Travel Instructors in the state. The network allows members to:
  - Share best-practices and resources
  - Ask questions and offer advice
  - Hold in-person meetings across the state to facilitate communication & information sharing
- A similar resource for Volunteer Driver Programs may be valuable in:
  - Sharing potential approaches to liability insurance
  - Sharing different program policy approaches
  - Shaping research and policy input at the state level

**Potential resources that could be provided by the peer network**

- Train the trainer programs
- Sharing resources
- Knowledge of programs that exist across the state
- Connection to peers who are working on similar issues
- Host regional forums